

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy.

FAIR AND BALANCED NO LONGER APPLIES WHEN MEDIA CONGLOMERATES DECIDE WHAT THE PUBLIC SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT SEE--THE DECISION BY SINCLAIR TO PULL THE NIGHTLINE EPISODE OF READING THE NAMES OF FALLEN SOLDIERS COMES TO MIND. I HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH THIS DOCUMENTARY BEING SHOWN IN THEATRES OR OFFERED ON VHS OR DVD. I REALIZE THAT THE FCC TAKES A "HANDS OFF" POSITION ON SUCH ISSUES, HOWEVER, WHEN SUCH PROGRAMS ARE "REQUIRED" TO BE AIRED AS "NEWS" ON COMMERCIAL TELEVISION THE LINE BETWEEN EXCHANGE OF KNOWLEDGE AND POLITICAL OR FISCAL AGENDA ARE BLURRED. RECALLING THE ROSS PEROT POLITICAL COMMERCIALS, THERE SHOULD, AT THE VERY LEAST, BE A DISCLAIMER RUN THROUGHOUT THE AIRING LETTING VIEWERS KNOW THAT THEY ARE WATCHING SOMETHING THAT IS NOT BEING ACCREDITED BY OTHER NEWS ORGANIZATIONS.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.